

PETER OF CORTONA
AND OTHER POEMS
ELEANOR GRAY

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PETER OF CORTONA

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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PETER OF CORTONA
AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ELEANOR GRAY



LONDON
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO., Ltd.
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1909

To
S. M. T.
MY
FRIEND

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PETER OF CORTONA

PIETRO

We're old now you and I, but it was worth
It all, the life of struggle 'gainst life's odds,
To add to Italy another grace—
Please her with yet a gem, the world agape
At wonder of her crown. You ask me, you,
Old man who know the whole of me, how call
My jewel—you who found me instruments
For cutting, carving, polishing. Hard work
Of brain and hand I grudged not, once the stone
Clean, solid in my hand. I saw the glow
Of sunrise 'neath its crust, its soul on fire
For freedom—and fled straight the woolly flock,
My care since infancy—the hills whose slopes
And crags and brooklets fed my dreams, whose calls
Nights long I heard when God let down His lamps
To make Heaven's canopy white, luminous,
'Neath which the angels chanted "Fame."

THOMASO

We sit at ease, ay, glad of our arm-chairs,
Substantial comforts suited to our years ;
Food, drink, the best—tho' 'twas not that we lacked

As urchins. Ah, you scapegrace, many a meal
 'Neath friendly mattress hid, warm, succulent,
 We plucked that never grew there ; well, go on—
 They whispered "Fame."

PIETRO

And when I climbed as oft
 To "Santa Margaret," the cypress trees
 Gloom'd o'er me, as their wizard arms would drag
 Me tomb-deep for their wailings of dead hopes ;
 But at Jean Baptist Tommaso's rare carved
 Sarcophagus, Centaurs and Lapithæ
 In deadly fight at marriage feast of king,
 In bas-relief, there stirr'd within my soul
 Remembrance—

but in faint uncertain way,
 And what ? I knew not, save that would I aught—
 Recall, my fortress'd stronghold must I quit
 (Etrurian relics) once Cortona held
 How long ago, her proud head high. To-day
 Her robes magnificent are rags, scarce hide
 Her withered beauties.

THOMASO

And you found me out,
 You rascal, made a thief of me, of me,
 Their model scullion—not so far from Pope
 Himself, whilst washing dishes of my lord
 The Cardinal—to think I should have sinn'd

Thus 'neath the scarlet robe ! For when I saw
Foot-sore, a-starve your plight, my withers shrank
And all my gorgings mocked at me, like ghouls
A-satiate, and I braved the lot of them,
Cook, Pope, and Cardinal, and smuggled you
Cat-soft to Attic 'neath the stars, where, rogue,
With what audacity you claimed as right
Bed, board, and "holy virgin" wherewithal
To purchase paper, pencils, and what not
The need of your most high and mightiness—
For little drawings—said you, "yours the means
"And mine the skill, or will be," and your right
I gave, for we were friends, yet friendship then
To us meant little save divided spoil.

PIETRO

I saw in crossing many a barren track—
God, and the Angels bending o'er the Earth,
God's mother with an infant angel prest
To bosom, and the mothers of dead babes
Regaining them, and women once had wept
(Tear traces still upon them) at her feet,
And then an Angel one day pointed way
To Florence, and I rose and left my sheep

THOMASO

A nice young shepherd and a trustworthy,
I wonder what befel them? 'Twas your luck
Escape a trouncing, one well merited

Instead of Cardinal's dinner, how you ate
(Great heavens) the stuff I took upstairs first
night

I thought to see your rags give out thro' strain
Of over-fulness. How I laughed and shook
With joy of you—belief in you, my own
One little bit of the All Father's care
For me, in the great palace where I dwelt
So lonely.—

But our attic made you brave
With pageants of your fancies, bare white walls
Grew rampant with your chargers, battles raged—
Cathedrals, Churches, Altar-pieces vied
With Popes, Priests, and Processions for your touch
Of magic.

PIETRO

Then I wandered streets, the shores
Of Arno, saw projecting spur on spur
The Apennines rise to their heights, till lost
In after-glow of sunset. Then sublime
Fell solemn fame of Dante on my heart—
Giotto, Lippi, Michael Angelo
Seem'd beckoning, and all the other names
Like fire-flies danced before me, and I knew
My destiny—ay, I've achieved it man,
But how you know not, not as once thought I
Who grasped at shadow, substance in my hand
The gods propitious gave me both ; fare I
Now aging, of their very best.

THOMASO

Well-earned

Your honours, and deserved your fame, for famed
Your work is (fine Falernian this, come fill,
Sachetti quaffed it on high festivals).
How run one's thoughts on childhood, sitting
here.

You were a plucky chap you, Pietro, went
Oft with an empty stomach, brain well-fill'd
With ancient ditties, but night brought you back
For capon leg, polenta, or else dates
You loved, when I could capture them—
Or figs, black, luscious, and a crust for teeth
A-begging. Sometimes draught of wine, not oft
They kept a sharp eye on the vintage—then
For thanks you gave me drawings, all of them
To look at—not so sordid after all
Was life of lad could leave his pots and plates
Of daytime in the kitchen, and at night
Ascend to company of Goddesses
On high Olympus—or with heroes wage
Grim battles, or descend Plutonian depths
Where splendour upon splendour met his gaze
Unblest by gleam of fertilizing sun.
Or hear the tales of our own Florence here,
First city in the world in literature
And wealth—and prowess of her sons. Oh I
Would live it all again, we were not dull

PIETRO

You're Poet, and yet so unaware of it.

THOMASO

Strange Poet never penn'd a metre, well,
I had my Painter to be proud of, I,
To feed him, hide him and have privilege
Of throwing arms about him when I would.
We had no mother, sisters, but our love
Sufficed.

PIETRO

My gem gleams splendid as the stars.

THOMASO

That day!

The terror of it shrivels my old flesh
When with his architect Sachetti came
To our dominion, thou wast not, but I
The culprit as supposed, must evidence
Of guilt show, paradox, a scullion
Wield stick of carbon with such mastery.
"Doff apron, boy, no longer servitor
"Of mine, I have a conscience, take amiss
"A genius in my kitchen. Save for art
"In serving things comestible—no use
"There for a dauber." But his voice belied
His words, and down I fell prone at his feet
And prayed compassion for my Peter's sake.

“Peter, who’s Peter?” cried the Cardinal.
 “My friend, sire, and so poor, he sleeps with
 me
 “At night, and makes his pictures. God it
 was
 “Said ‘Peter paint me’ nights upon the hills,
 “Cortona’s, and he wandered all the way,
 “An Angel guiding him, until he found
 “Me, also from Cortona, whom he bade
 “Give shelter for the work’s sake he would do
 “For Italy—oh turn me not adrift
 “’Tis Peter I must work for, he would starve
 “Painting his pictures did none give him bread.”

PIETRO

When God’s face left me, yours I had instead
 To bless me, He in you was manifest
 To help me, for myself, and you, and Him,
 Make beautiful one phase in His great world—
 Bring to perfection just one attribute
 Of Soul—nay, not by pictures, Thomas, great
 Unselfish heart. No greatness is as great
 As that nobility forgets itself
 For others’ benefit, rejoicing in
 Another’s joy, nor asking for itself
 Praise, recognition, willing to be naught
 That others may be all, as you these years.
 (I have you safe, dear jewel, in my heart.)

THOMASO

And then Sachetti. "Show me, boy, the mouse
"Hath fattened in my corn-bin, have him out."
I told him 'twas your custom not return
Till sun left street in shadow. Said I not
"A mouse," well, bring him for his sentence, how
I shook and gazed imploring up to face.
"I'm but a lad, sire, with no sheltering roof
"Save this, nor has my Peter." "Cheer up, boy,"
Said Cardinal, whilst kindly hand my head
Pressed. Looking up I saw in deep-set eyes
Such tenderness I quite forgot to quake—
And then we sought you, searched the city's heart
For you, long days, until men thought you "myth"
And me a liar, as if God's very self
I would deny in gift, had He vouchsafed
Such to my care—I guarded it in you
Well as I knew—at last—the Priests aware—
Heard rumour that a distant Convent housed
Youth of rare promise—dead to all but love
Of a Madonna, Rafael's pencil traced
Sublime her features, his the eye caught gleam
Of a divinity obscured by flesh
To earth beholders. There they found you, rapt—
Transferring to your canvas all of her
Save what was best, and Rafael's. You so young—
Aspiring! Well, Sachetti took you thence
You know the rest, and how I, Thomaso,

With naught commend me, equal bounty shared.
A good old man the Cardinal—to us !

These peaceful evenings void of incident,
Dear to our age, are rife with memories
Of strenuous days, old Peter, as we sit
Together to the last, all striving done—
In this fair Florence of our youth's best dreams,
And ready hand in hand when God shall call
Us home.

PIETRO

When He shall call us, Thomaso,
Thou shalt be crown'd, the beauty see of that
Thou gav'st so freely, sympathy, the joys
Of fellowship, all made my work worth while.
Freely I took thy gifts, thy cherishings,
As we take sunshine, rain, the fruits, the flowers
Of Earth. I gave no thanks, myself was thanks
Enough, and gratitude, and that no words
Were said—so much more love for banquet, yet
With end of this phase near, and that our voice
Be other in another sphere, this once
Let words have sway. My Friend, my higher self,
Hast lifted me so high I could not fail
Grasp star for thee from wealth of God. To thee
My "Art" was best of me for fame it brought
To give me happiness — know now — "Art,"
"Fame,"
Compared with gift to make a friend are naught.

What were my pictures, thou the soul of them
Away? My fame's small measure, thou not near
Applaud its wreathings? Happy the king one
Friend can name from crowd of sycophants, one
Heart can rest upon in life's time-serving
Crowd. That king am I, and humbly, deep,
Deep in my heart of hearts I hold thy heart
My Friend—God's great inestimable gift
To me—as foretaste of the better life to come.
Heaven's greatest boon is love of man for man—
See'st "gem" now? Many pictures testify
Of many Painters, faults in most of them to mar
Perfection of God's vision beautiful—
Few records have we of it realized
In friendship, the poor name for that no man
Can name. I bear upon my brow, seal, stamp
Of thy god element, whereby if death
Should part us for a space thou wilt regain
Me, thee I could not miss, all glorious
In immortal robes have not in contact
With the world been soil'd—

The scene is fair, how
Gleam those stars to-night. Heaven's very near.

Come,
'Tis cool now, let's to supper—good this fire!

OUT OF THE DEPTHS

PART I

AND shall a man for any crime be bann'd
Since all men sin? Is sin 'gainst nature more
Than sin of hate? And tho' repented, not
To be forgiven? Soul from the prison cell,
Thy voice cleaves to the very heart of God,
Who, swift descending to the nether depths
Looks on his handiwork.—

Prone, naked, still

After that one supremest cry, he lies—
All beauty fled, who was of men most fair,
Whose genius flame-like swept the world of Art,
Fantastic, gained him notoriety.
Dead? Not ev'n Death had pity! Living? Ay
If life be this, one bleeding, senseless lie—
Encaged, to rot in brain and heart and flesh—
To ask for nothing more, to be or not to be all one.

The agony is past—

The rage, the dumb despair, revolt and hope
(Ev'n Prisoners hope) and shame red-hot that burned
Within his eyes' deep sockets, burning sin
But not consuming, countless eyes and smiles
That mocking, crowded hideous night, white nights

Would not be lonely, friends slinking sideways
Glance to steal, poor fools, at that which pass'd. Or—
Longing for the sea, the ridgy sands, or
Secret-whisp'ring brook, or torture of the fiends
In search for that unholy sight, a soul
Damn'd by its lusts.

All ended now, he lies
Spent, outraged, and God gazes on his work,
Alone he gazes in that lonely place,
No sound is heard, no voice beseeching cries
“Forgive.” For He and man have done their worst.

PART II

But who is this before ev'n God Himself
Grows dim? Strong thorn-crowned? Ah! the
Galilean,
And justice shrinks before that look of love,
And flees his victim, whom the Christ with
“This is not end, but the beginning,” lifts—
“Thy sin but husk of sweetest grain, but bulb
“Of perfect flower. I was with thee in Hell,
“I saw thy quest, blind search for truth, thy Soul
“Stark, hurrying o'er the wastes, drinking henbane
“And verjuice for the vintage of the sun—
“Dancing the ‘dance of death’. I saw thy lead
“To Tophet, saw thy fall, watched thee thro' pains
“Stern throes, saw the repentance Victor crowned
“Thee, mourn'd with thee, thy loss of liberty

"To roam wing-footed frozen meres, and woods
 "To feast with vine-wreathed feres, then pass
 grotesque
 "In garb to dungeon, loathing earth, thyself!
 "Arise, but bolts these, forged in underworld—
 "Powerless to slay thee. Reach! above there's
 Heaven!
 "And earth still beckons, come, but not to home
 "Of Pharisee, whose robe we might defile—
 "Not to the Church hath stol'n for cloak my name—
 "Not to the nichéd saint—but where they haunt
 "The leper, outcast, murderer, Magdalen,
 "Young children, such as Heaven make fair, above,
 "The Stars, the blue—the winds, the rains that heal.
 And lifting eyes—divinest pity shone
 On face strange, yet familiar reflex
 Of humanity, pain's epitome.
 No condemnation, or allowance of
 A stone, and wearily 'Thou see'st, dear Christ,'
 "The broken harp-strings, that my touch defiled,
 "Hang tuneless as my heart, but tune it thou
 "Harmonious, that new songs blot out the old,
 "Songs to free prisoners, thaw their frost-bound
 hearts.
 "Restore to earth stol'n Darling—from the
 Depths—

.

And humbly with the Spear-pierced pass'd he
 hence.

THE TRIUMPH OF LIGHT

PERSONS

PHOTOS. The Light-Bringer.
SKOTEINOS. Monarch in the Underworld.
 Spirits.

SCENE.—*Debating ground between the Kingdoms of Light and
Darkness.*

SKOTEINOS

Not disillusioned yet? No ebb of faith
In things material, tho' about thee dash
Bat-like my minions, moths with print of death—
Ill fowl for carrion vext? This seething pit
Of pitch revolving with the luckless lent
Me ear, their choice for mansions in God's house.
They shriek! 'Tis well. I train them, orchestra,
Mad chorus, soli, symphony bizarre
Compose, leit-motif, sin. That devils' trill
My masterpiece. We're all musicians here
Of some sort, tho' in discords practice we
As suited to our audience. Prithee
Go hence, forego thy claim. I'm monarch here.

PHOTOS

Reign yet a little, scoffer, ignorant
Thy spark must die in contact with my Sun!

The Triumph of Light 15

Must die, be merged with it, and purified,
No cavern how'er deep its gloom may keep,
No night not change to day : no grief not pass
From wail to rhapsody.

SKOTEINOS

Still certain art
Of conquest? Here's power's proof—an evidence
Canst not rebut. List to this dotard's whine.
[*Beckon spirit to approach.*]

SHADE OF MUSICIAN

I mourn alas too late
The folly brought me here,
The madness chose thy bait
With light so near.

I gave to music all
Strength, love, high dreams of Youth,
Then subtle came thy call,
I fell forsooth.

Thy promise—wealth, a “name,”
The world—would I forsake
My visions, to my shame
Now Hell I shake

With wild disharmonies
To swell thy triumph-throng

16 The Triumph of Light

Who might have swept the skies
With lyre and song.

[*Disappears.*]

SKOTEINOS

Come hither thou of errant locks, they tale
Unfold—

[*Shade of faithless woman.*]

Wouldst see afresh my wounds, my woe?
Wouldst pitiless my anguish show!

Wouldst gloat afresh
Upon the wild bird, caught in mesh?

'Twas thou betray'dst me, foolish, young,
Persuaded with insidious tongue,

No recompense
For gold were love and innocence.

And when with wealth one came, I slipt
My love, in Stygian river dipt,

Then as thou art
I knew thee, traitor—broke my heart.

[*Vanishes.*]

SKOTEINOS

Art satisfied I stand secure?

PHOTOS

I see thy triumph, hast good cause for boast—
I yield thee master—master of thy kind,
Arch master of suggestion, in so far
As I allow—not yet do I declare

The Triumph of Light 17

Myself, nor might I hold in leash—to-day
Apparent reign'st, my dawn still little speck,
Yet creeps it o'er the hills, seest thou yon child
Lead ancient malefactor o'er the verge
With song and dance—with thee he dwelt a space,
Defiling with the mire his simple robe—
Behind them myriads wait, till I shall flash
Across the sentient darkness of the void
With a great cry of "Light," and draw within
The widening circle of my influence
All good and ill, all has been, and shall be.
Thy conquests of the flesh are of the flesh,
And as the flesh will pass—save for this space
Of purging in an underworld. Thou canst
Not hold them back, when with tempestuous wing
I drive my steeds thro' central and combined
Sphere forces, and alight with meteor crash
Upon the monstrous edifice conceived
By thee in lust of power, to damn my schemes
For the small world—to hurl it into space.

SKOTEINOS

I will oppose thee, spite thy boasts, spite cross,
Death, resurrection, spite of church entail'd—
See here in torment those made boast of thee!

PHOTOS

If not disabled by o'erwhelming din
Of woe unspeakable, list to the sounds

18 The Triumph of Light

Of voices thro' the ether, sweet and low,
Content expressing, and the higher strains
Of love made manifest. If thro' this smoke,
Black, hot and sulphurous, thine eyes can pierce,
See those have conquered death and thee, in state
Unutterably blest. Thou art no foe
To pit thy might 'gainst mine—best truce here
make
Lower thy standard—Not? Come, spirit, speak,
The sight of one redeemed, his pride may shake
In preparation of the fall must end
His reign.

(SPIRIT OF REDEEMED ATHEIST)

Shall I tell him how I fell
To the very gate of Hell?
Shall I lift again the screen
That he gaze, who might have been
But for thee my chosen King?
Wilt thou Photos that I sing?

PHOTOS

So far art thou removed from him and woe,
Redeeméd spirit, I would have it so.

SPIRIT

Innocent and undefiled,
Dwelt I once a happy child,
Faith in love, in God, in prayer

The Triumph of Light 19

Paradise made everywhere,
Till disarmed in idle hour
Dread Skoteinos sought my bower,
Broke with specious argument
All my world.—With forces spent
Rudderless upon life's sea
Drifted I eternally,
Till I heard thee in the storm,
Saw the glory of thy form
Shrinking, sinking, mad with fright
Cried I, light, oh give me light,
Hearing anguish, thou did'st bend,
Lifted me from foe to friend,
Saved I stand upon thy shore
Now, and praise with these outpour.

[*Departs.*

SKOTEINOS

That one I lost thro' lack of vigilance !

PHOTOS

And what of these ?

[*Hosts of armed angels appear.*

Ay, frown ! Gave I the sign

Would'st shattered lie before me, princely crown

And sceptre hither, thither, carried far

By warring winds, then plunged to fathomless

Black seas, thy downfall comes, no idle dream

My resurrection, I, my very self

Not flesh and blood that is not I, but soul

20 The Triumph of Light

That casts at death, earth trammels, hindering flight
To airs sublime of heaven, appeared to men,
Who loving deeply, held me by that power
From flight too far for reach, lest losing sight
They lost the promise of immortal life.

Oh love shall conquer death, ev'n thy soul's plight
Shall healing find in some far ultimate
Time process. Love, intensest thought of love
Works miracles. Spread, spread thy wings. Day
dawns,

Divine events and happenings at hand.

The pure in heart see little gulf 'twixt life

And death o'erbridged even now, and cross from
state

To state at will. Thy star recedes, mine grows—

Its effluent light irradiates the East

To bless that thou hast cursed.

[*Skoteinos shrieking.*

Enough! Enough!

[*Disappears.*

THE ASCETIC

IN THE WILDERNESS

HERE dwell I, lost to men, the things of sense
Abjured, the living loves of life cast hence.
Body, once object of fastidious pride
Scarce human now, disfigured, rank like hide
Of beast ; more fit such wise for God to see
Than erst with heart hell of iniquity.
What cares He for the husk, save that its ill
Provides a weapon 'gainst the Devil's skill
To kill the Soul—the heart must in His sight
Be pure.

Not meet for me an anchorite
To dwell on subtleties of mind and flesh ;
Temptations even of thought come ever fresh
To rend—drag down the willing soul to earth.
No easy task at first, the throes of birth
Well past, to guide this newborn headstrong thing
Past languorous delights, past scents that cling
About the silken garments women wear,
Past conflict, sounds of warfare, past the glare
Of noonday, with its myriad mad delights,
Its lusts, its triumphs, its delirious nights—

On to this abnegation, this decay
 Of sense flesh mortifying, till the day
 Of Death translate me purified, and meet
 Casting this vesture off—to kiss His feet !

[Hears a sound without.

Hark, hark, what sense, what sound invades my cell.
 A voice? Sweet as wind murm'ring in a shell.
 What voice? A woman's, hermit close thine ear,
 Better ten devils than one woman here.
 Soft, she entreats. Ah, God, lest I succumb—
 Beasts rend her limbs! Strike me now deaf and
 dumb—

“My Charity?” None, none for such as thee,
 Hither fled I to escape thee! “Charity”
 To men,—who striving heavenward feel their skirts
 Caught backward, catch a helpless look that hurts—
 That turns them at the grasp—to let thee die.
 (Thus safety sealing for mankind thereby)
 Still urging?—Still entreating?—God of Grace
 Flesh craves one glimpse of this forbidden face.
 Swift, to the door, ah! vision of delight,

[Ghost of woman appears.

A woman's form stands glowing in the light
 Like ship of gold upon a sunlit sea!

(SPIRIT OF WOMAN)

“What, hermit! Art afraid to gaze on me?
 “’Tis I should shrink to see thee, art a man?
 “Not of God's image! Quite another plan!

"Enter? what hast to offer? Delicate

"Thou seest me, dainty. Leave not to thy fate?

"Thy fate? Why hither camst? What woman
wept

"As ruthless thou her clasped arms tore that crept

"About thee, seeking by their tender hold

"Yet faster chain of love to forge? Behold

"Thro' love Heaven's gate! Thou fear'st in
Hell to burn?

"To man, then, turn thine eyes, thy heart. To spurn

"The least is to slight Him who slighted none,

"Not ev'n the Magdalen, nor thief upon

"The Cross, would'st show to Love a better way

"By hate of love made manifest? Betray

"To wolves thy babes to save thy Soul alive?

"I come to warn thee." For the rest, contrive

"To fit thy heart to Christ's, not Christ's to thine,

"Who trod the winepress to supply thy wine.

"Attempt no touch, intangible as mist

"I come to show the way thy feet have missed

"And vanish.

[*Spirit departs, Hermit on threshold of
but, half stunned.*]

"Like a flash from riven cloud

"Athwart earth's blackness, Truth unveils the
shroud

"Enveloped, narrow'd sphere I clutch as life,

"The naked, blasted boughs, decaying, rife

"With crawling insect—where the gracious shade

"Of foliage an oasis should have made.

"What use these limbs, these eyes, this heart, if not

"For use here, fashioned by God's hand? To
blot,

"Erase His work is but to mock Him. Brand

"Him Bungler, as to say 'no master hand

"His, carved this rudimentary thing, but see

"I take it, shape it, superfluity

"Lop off—lo, mark you, perfected!' Such I,

"Yea I, who law of Christ forgot. A lie

"Made of his truth. Who mocks to see me now

"Naked and barren. Woman, is it thou

"My heart denied? Then are thy wrongs
avenged.

"Christ, is it Thou? How wilt thou be revenged?

"Remembering all thy love, dare I beseech

"Still further grace, new strength for upward
reach?

"New light, who wanton let thy light go out?

"Oh Light, my heart obscured with film of doubt

"Of thy life giving power, dost veil thy face,

"Now the scales fall'n I would my steps retrace?

"Retrace! No more for me the morning glow,

"But if at eve with trembling steps, and slow

"Sad beating heart, thou vouch me but a star

"Great God, for the full sun I left afar

"To trace Thee by, I may at least somewhere

"Not utterly extinct, of Thee be 'ware."

A LAMENT

HER voice went wailing up the Athenian hills
“ Would I had seen thee die, composed thy limbs,
“ Laid thee to rest, sole object of my care
“ In our long wanderings, I had been blest—!
“ Oh Theseus, King, redresser of men’s wrongs
“ Reveal the secret, that my steps may draw
“ Hid seeds to blossom where he lies so low.
“ Fled, fled, my sire, reft from thy grief-swept
 child,
“ What now is left save heritage of woe ?
“ Thy crimes (tho’ ignorant) of me are part,
“ I reap their poison as didst thou, accurst
“ Thy offspring live, accurst will die, where shades
“ Of Hades flutt’ring in a night eterne
“ Received thee, I had followed at thy word
“ Since all is gone with thee, home, hope of maid
“ To come to full fruition in due time
“ In husband, child. Frown, frown ye heavens
 and flash
“ Ye lurid lightnings o’er a world engulfed
“ In pitchy blackness of its crimes. For sin
“ In one is sin in all, none stands alone.
“ Oh God ! Oh Gods, fulfil your wrath in me

“ Make me your holocaust, and where they roam
“ Dread Sire, dread mother bring me, that our
tears

“ Mingle in one red shower to cleanse our stains.

“ Thou see'st Heaven retribution at my hands

“ Claims, that these groves, these altars I must
leave

“ Since other toils await me, take my thanks

“ For tenderness to him, and now farewell !

“ Antigone, Antigone, oh name

“ To shun in shudd'ring worlds, what thing am I ?

“ A noisome growth upon a noble tree !

“ A curse and not a blessing was my birth

“ A curse that will not die—”

Weeping, she pass'd—

And all wept as she crost the verge unto

The crimson clouds that presage instant death.

SONG OF THE FLESH

1

HERE'S a song of the flesh, crude and sweet,
My own flesh from the throe
And the wail, till I leapt to my feet,
Felt the cold and the heat
Thro' me flow.

2

To the race, to the bath, to the feast,
To the woman I love!
Fret and fume, to the call of the beast
From the greatest to least
I will prove.

3

All was good, I would live it again,
Quit my chair, old and sage—
It is sweet even now thro' the pane
See the day dawn and wane—
Bird in cage.

4

Caught at last droop of wing. Still I feel—
And I worship thee, flesh,
Drink oblations, burn incense and kneel,
If perchance I may steal
Thee afresh.

TO THEE

1

Oh passionate, strong heart !
I have found thee, the mate of my own.
From humanity's heart counterpart
Of me, joy of me, groan

2

Of me, never again
To be free of me, soul once above
Me so far. Didst thou stoop? Did I strain
To thee, wonder of love

3

Thro' love's sacrament? Kiss
That has burnt up my flesh, fann'd the flame
Of my spirit—has made of me this
Thou canst name without shame?

A COUNTRY WALK

I

A RICH-HUED meadows stretch,
And in the distance dream blue villages
 On sloping hills,
And moors which o'er the ages
 Have had their wills.

2

Gay children, each young wretch
Comes with a pilfered armful of wild roses
 The pathway down.
A youth his love discloses
 In hedge-bower brown.

A LAMENT

SMOKE from red-roofed houses, blue wind-swept,
Ascends like incense swung by acolyte
Towards the Churchyard, where the dead from sight
Are kept.

High on the cliff the Church stands, hoar and grey,
Surrounded by a thousand memory-stones,
And men live 'neath a roof of bleached bones
To-day.

The river still flows outward to the sea,
Old scene of labours of those now aloft,
The tide still ebbs and flows, still shipwrecks oft
Death's fee.

Old, old the Earth, and life is at its wane,
Toil, toil must man in sight of all his graves
And dream of pleasure, as of freedom, slaves
In vain.

RECALLED

TRAGIC face,
Unutterably sad, life's history traced
Upon the sculptured beauty that once graced
The world, and placed
Her foremost in the race.

But she fell !
And envious tongues rejoicing, swift expell'd
Altho' repentant, that their height excell'd,
And o'er her knell'd
Triumphant ban and bell.

Dust to dust !
A miracle ! She rises dust encrusted,
And casts the damned sin out for which she lusted
Her soul entrusted
To God, nor was nonpluss'd.

SEA-GULLS

I

THE Fishermen lean o'er the rails
Of the Pier—with a roar
Come the waves leaping o'er
The black rocks, to the shore
That's strewn with debris of the gale.

2

They watch for the storm to abate—
They are strong, lust of toil
In their eyes, love not boil
Of the surf, their assoil.
“To-morrow” says each to his mate.

3

The gulls float like boats, then uprise
Drift like huge flakes of snow,
Coral feet hanging low
As they wing to and fro
And scream in the wind, as it sighs

4

“To-morrow.” Ah, bread must be won
For the youngsters, the wives,
At the risk of men’s lives,
And the Storm God them shrives
If they drown ere the set of the Sun.

WHAT BEHIND THE SCREEN?

I

To the realms beyond sense, beyond thought
 Let us flee,
You of courage, who devils have fought,
 Come with me.

2

Let us slip when no eye is aware
 Out of sight,
Cast our garb that provokes the world's stare
 To the night.

3

There is something, you feel it, but "mad,"
 Wise men cry,
'Neath your hood therefore hide your smile glad
 Till you die.

4

Or they say "he is dead." There's our door
 Of escape,
'Spite the candles, the garlands, the lore
 Of the crape.

36 What Behind the Screen?

5

Once I lifted the screen, just a wink
And behind—
Was it God that I saw there, the link
With our kind,

6

In the light of a new atmosphere
Full and free,
'Mid the sights and the sounds I saw clear,
With the key

7

I brought, babe, from the wonderful deep
In my hand?
To unlock the door oft, and to creep
To the land

8

Of the faery, or heaven if you will !
Bards have sung
Magic songs, strong and grand, but there still
Hangs unstrung

9

A new lyre, with new tones still to ring.
A new theme
For the bards yet to come—who will sing
O'er the dream

10

Of the Past, of the new day to be.
Lights have shone
In the world flickered out ; but we see
Now they're gone

11

Blossom out to the dawn, a new Star !
A new voice
Thro' the Universe hear from afar
Cry, rejoice !

“ OLD ROSIE ”

REMINISCENT OF A LECTURE

A SIMPLE life as lives of poor folk are,
Yet different in that she made it sweet
With patience in the pain had wrecked her years.
Her locks a hundred winter snows had blanced,
A century of roses swept her cheeks.—
A rose-tree bower'd her window, up her walls
Strove ivy, jessamine. The Parish doled
Enough to keep her from that larger house—
Dread monster of strong English poor, who hate
To herd like swine. The Holy writ, her books,
Her “faith” with glory filled the little room
And since high places, princes of this world
Are not accounted in his Scheme, God walks
With strange companions—is not popular!
In praise her days pass'd and in prayer her nights,
Oft bent my sire with little crew, his steps
There, well recall I service held and hymn
Her favourite “Rock of Ages,” and the prayer
For each, and last “God bless the little lad,”
“Make him a Preacher,” and I wept to hear—
I would not be a preacher, no, not I,

'Twas ever thus, hands on my head, “ Make him
 A Preacher,” then one day she said “ God calls.”
 The morrow came she not, still and strange
 And solemn that was left of her, and when
 I saw her coffin'd, borne by loving hands
 To rest, I fled “ God's Acre ” weeping sore
 And kneeling cried, “ Make me a preacher God
 “ For Rosie's sake.” And hearing He downstept,
 And led by mystic ways my growing Soul
 Into the deep recesses of men's hearts—
 “ The little green oases half forgot
 In strife with arid sands and bitter blasts.”
 And thro' the years “ God bless the little lad,
 Make him a preacher,” rang like trumpet-blare
 Before me, and I feared no mortal foe,
 But pass'd to haunts of sin, and in God's name
 Brought out some sheep, some erring child restor'd
 To love, and Rosie prayed above “ God bless ” !
 He blest, and thousands are with Rosie now
 Whose voice I was, and am God grant till death.

THE ABSENT FRIEND

I SEE you not, but I am aware of you, my friend,
And wish for you as for myself,
Not good that comes from store of pelf,
But love, strong love, in storm or shine, till your
life's end.

THE SUICIDE

I

HUMBLE as hedgerow flower—
Meek as a little child,
No wild
Emotion presaged this eventful hour.

2

Stretched there so delicate,
So slight of form, the pride
So late
Of family, what secret doth it hide?

3

What secret? None will know.
She paid life's debt with this
Harsh blow.
And who shall say 'twas done amiss?

THE RETURN

I

THE best of it is you are still
Our leader, not lost
In that storm, tempest-tost
Tho' you were, whilst we, at what cost—
Of sorrow, and presage of ill
Mourn'd you dead.

2

But back again! You, as of yore
Command us, give heart
When we fail, fall apart.
Bid us up with—"Make a fresh start,
"Trust God lives, let cannons out roar
"O'er the dead."

3

You living—the rest His affair!
We're glad have you back
For our Yule, you, not track
Of you in the snow, not your lack
In our lives, but you, solid, square
Heart and head.

DAYLIGHT ON THE THING

1

Nor you alone the sin my friend,
Noxious, damns with its disease,
Men must to its lees
Drink of your cup to the bitter end.

2

Excusable, temptation great?
None be wiser for your slip,
If you after dip—
Wash off the stains o' the fruit you ate?

3

Your soul fulfilment craved? Ah well,
Best have waited God's sure way—
Wrought not in His day
Clamour, set loose in it fiends from hell.

4

Too late! Ah, that is the worst of it,
Daylight on the thing you are
Might have been a star
Men had aspired to! God! How they spit

44 Daylight on the Thing

5

Their venom on you, hustle down
Screen you nail'd above your door—
Rag that hid your sore
Drag you with paramour thro' the town.

6

But saddest when anger is o'er,
Passion burnt out, and we make
Face smooth for your sake,
Loved, ay forgiven—but worshipt no more.

SONG OF EVERYDAY MEN AND WOMEN

I WILL sing you songs of the soil,
Of you everyday men and women
Who can scarce look up from your toil.

Smell you not the scent of its breath,
Men and women,
As you stoop over it till death?

Flowers it brought forth for you, and smiled
Women,
From the dark, as you when your child

Leapt to light from the depths of you
Oh everyday men and women—
Your brows wet with sweat as with dew

On the grass at break of the day,
Men and women—
Wayside toilers, what do you say

To those who despise whilst they use
You, men and women?
'Tis a quest of stockings and shoes,

46 Everyday Men and Women

And a cast-off coat and a crust !

 Oh everyday men and women
Who labour, since labour you must,

So cheerfully, you are my theme,
 Women,
I love you, and hot my tears stream

As I see you patiently bear,
 Oh women,
Such outrage of sorrows would scare

God's Angels if such were about.
 Men

Of the masses, whom classes scout,

I admire you all good and bad—
 Men,
You are root, comes fruit from your sad

Submergence, your blood feeds the vine
 Men,
That changes the grape to the wine.

You are ship brings cargo to land,
 Men,
From perils of seas. You are sand

In the hour-glass, moving to time,
 Men,
In a mass. Of England you're prime.

Everyday Men and Women 47

In battle to deal blow for blow,

Men,

You front worlds. Oh could you but know

Your worth in the great scheme of God,

Everyday men and women,

You were monarchs, every poor clod

Of you—as you one day will be

Men—women,

Your slough off—wings spreading—strong,
free.

CONTINUITY

1

IN my quiet room—
Just a roof 'twixt me and the sky—
I sit alone.
And the shadows loom
Of ebon nights, and the bats that fly
Round a yew-watched tomb
That will be my own.

2

But will it be rest
There for spirit as well as flesh?
Soul answers, no!
And the crimson breast
Of the setting sun, and the breezes fresh
Of the God attest
To whose bourne I go.

THE CRITIC OF MINOR POETS

I

THESE minor poets that they write,
Will write amazes me ;
My sarcasms are wasted quite,
My wit lost equally.

2

My pen in vitriol I dipt,
I held them up to scorn,
I ridiculed them, yea, I stript
Them, bare as they were born.

3

But all in vain ! They write—and write—
Their volumes make no plea,
Until I think, in sorry plight,
They're not aware of me !

ONE OF THE SUBMERGED

I

A WOMAN lies dying of want—
Dying a foul disease.
Around her a brood of children pant,
Hungry and ragged, their garments scant—
'Tis Winter and they freeze.

2

A man comes in madden'd with drink
(Oh that such things should be),
Curses the woman upon the brink,
Beats down a child, whilst the others shrink,
Making no useless plea.

3

Yet God is not ever so far
From us, as fools, we think ;
The dying woman sees bright a star,
Or thinks it a star, above the bar
That cleaves her window chink.

4

But 'tis eye of God, and her face
 Leaps from its guise of woe ;
She sees him gather in wide embrace
Prostitute, outcast, in life's rough race,
 Who lost him long ago.

5

He beckons her out from the gloom
 (Can it be God, she sighs !) ;
He burst the wall of that dismal room—
Bears her away.—What is left for tomb ?
 Naught but a Soul's disguise.

TO THE COUNTESS LURANI ON
RECEIVING HER PICTURE WITH
HER LITTLE SON

July 1907

AH Motherhood ! No other look
Makes face so fair.
A perfect pair
You make upon the carpet there.

So stately you, yet to this King
A Suppliant.
No more you want
A toy, to you he's everything.

The whole of him is in your eyes,
Love's sadness too—
He looks from you
Towards the world in grave surprise,

Half disapproving what he sees.
How will he meet
The storms that beat
Upon him in life's troublous seas ?

To the Countess Lurani 53

He looks a very hero now—
In storm and stress
Good God him bless,
And laurels grant to crown his brow.

Your crown is he, to pierce or grace!
Oh Italy,
Oh Friend to thee
My heart flies looking on your face.

THE KING DEBONAIR

THE King sits gay and debonair !
His courtiers around him, and women's soft voices
Amuse, hold and flatter, the King's heart rejoices.

The Castle's grim walls yield to modern devices,
And all is prepared that to pleasure entices
This King debonair.

The King sits gay and debonair !
The Hostess is lovely and not very stately,
She smiles on the King, as on others, well, lately—

This visit has been of unusual pleasure,
And satisfied with his disposal of leisure,
This King debonair.

The King sits gay and debonair !
The cards in his hand and a jest in the making—
When lo, his face falls and his hand is seen
shaking.

He gazes before him with horror-struck wonder
As one who is stricken in lightning and thunder,
This King debonair.

The King Debonair 55

The King sits gay and debonair !
The Lords and the Ladies rise up in confusion
As far in the Banquetting Hall an illusion,

Or is it reality there in the distance,
God's eye thro' the wall peers? Quick, quick to
assistance

Of King Debonair.

.

The King now lies not debonair !
No longer the courteous, the gay, fond of laughter,
Awaits he last rites of the Church, and what's
after

For King Debonair !

WHO WILL BE TRUE TO THEE, ENGLAND?

Who will sound in fuller strains, the triumph song
Of the long
Roll of men of mighty deeds with sword and pen,
Daring men—
Sea-dogs, fighters, empire builders, heaping fame
On thy name?
Who will sound the throbbing drums, the trumpet's
blare
Thro' the air,
As the long procession passes, and we gaze
With amaze
On the knights of stainless Arthur, whom bards
sing,
Ancient King
Whom we vaunt the "highest," wending to his
doom
Thro' the gloom?
Till the glory of Victoria's era shines
From the lines.
Culmination of the lustre of the land!
With her wand

Stretching o'er the nations who from end to end
Homage lend
To the starry constellation round her throne,
She alone
Steadfast, tender and emitting a great light
From her height
For the guidance of her sea-girt thronèd seat—
For her Fleet.—
For her armies, for her merchantmen, and all
Great and small
Who uphold her stately kingdom, men of brain
With their train,
Carrying out conceptions, opening wisdom's doors,
And her stores
Jealously long guarded? Who my England, who
Will be true
In the vistas to be traversed, who will love,
Who will prove
Champion to thee when the neighbouring nations rise
To surprise
Thee, old sleeping lion, careless of their pricks,
And the tricks
They will play upon thee, when thy anger grows
And o'erflows?
Wilt thou hold and guard thy own till the world's
end?
Wilt thou spend
Strength, and love, and prowess, for eternal good?
Thy manhood

For thy children's welfare, for thy flag unstained?
Still unchained
Wilt thou roam the Universe, and hold at bay
Old and grey
Foe, usurper and the worse foes in the land,
Hideous band,
Gambler and Seducer, lewd, effeminate,
Men, who hate
Honest labour, fattening idly on the wealth
Won by stealth
From the blood and sinews of the millions' toil
In the soil?
England, "land of glory," high heroic land!
Ever stand
Pioneer of progress, leading, leaping on,
On, that none
Slightingly may name thee, scoffing may pass by,
Ever high
Pitch thy note of freedom, lift thy clarion voice,
That rejoice
All the sons and daughters sprung from loins of
thee
In liberty.

THE EMPTY HOUSE

I

I PASSED an empty house, its walls o'er-grown
With callous ivy, trails of it down-blown
 Athwart the windows, whose dim panes
 With dust are strown
 And stains
 Of many rains.

2

The garden all entangled briar and rose,
And rank with weed that poisonous seed outblows,
 The paths moss-coated, golden, green.
 And moonlight throws
 Wild sheen
 Upon the scene.

3

Wierd shadows cast fantastic forms on wall
And grass, the wind moans drearily of all
 The happy voices of the past.
 The wild bird's call
 Was last
 Sound as I pass'd.

“THE UNDERWORLD OF HUMANITY”

“For we know the whole Creation groaneth and
travaileth in pain together until now.”

THY garden gate is closed, I beat against its bars
Out in the chilly night, above me shine the stars
Coldly and clear.

Grey rocky peaks uprise to fret the angry sky,
Black precipices yawn, and ghostly shadows fly
Distant and near.

Within—thy scented flowers, dim arbours and
green lawns,
Bright-pluméd tropic birds, gazelles and mild-eyed
fawns,

Made Paradise.

The sun with golden warmth dried morning's
gleaming dews,
And gilded gloriously the varied tints and hues
Of Earth and skies.

We lingered hand in hand, oh love, amongst the
flowers,
Drank nectar from quaint cups served in ambrosial
bowers,

Read books of lore,

“ Underworld of Humanity ” 61

Discussed Philosophy, Philanthropy, what not—
And in æsthetic pride our souls shrunk, and
forgot

That evermore
The common outer world is weeping in the shade
Of Hades' haunted gloom, in wan-eyed prayer for
aid ;

Forgot thy walls
Concealed the snow without, concealed the naked
feet
Shrinking and stained and blue of Children in the
street.

Whilst in thy halls
No sound of woe disturb'd the silence to our
ears,
No voice save voice of joy, no sorrow-laden tears.

We dwelt alone
In love with our ideals, our intellectual life
Unfettered by stern duty, and unmarred by strife
Of those who groan
In travail o'er the earth, whose pangs relieve no
pain,
Who live beneath the shadow of a tyrant's brain
To work his will.
Whose muscles are developed at their mind's
expense,
Or dragged down soul and body, past (in human
sense)

Beyond the skill

62 "Underworld of Humanity"

Of Priest to help or cure, they live and they are
dead,
Nor blazon forth their wrongs, nor show the wounds
which bled

By night and day,
Pale-eyed they disappear, no funeral pomp is held,
They have no time for grief, their tears perforce are
quelled.

Grief does not slay
Perceptibly, earth's sap still feeds the springs of youth.
But canker once begun, the serpent's cruel tooth

Pierces the flesh,
Nor will forego his prey until the last red drop
Assuage his hideous thirst, and naked bone shall stop
All ravage fresh—

Thy friendship was my life, of soul thou wast my
soul,

Our interests were one, beauty and love one whole,
One perfect dream.

Thine eyes, poetic lamps, cast over mine a spell,
And thus was I content in glam'rous light to dwell,
Lulled by the stream

Of Lethe's murmurings. Ah passionate regret,
And unavailing now. A crown of thorns is set

Upon my brow,
And through the world my limbs must ache beneath
the load

Of an unwieldy cross, must bleed at each fresh goad
Thrust from my vow

“ Underworld of Humanity ” 63

To leave my poet-dreams, fulfil a poet's lot
Of love and agony, where ease and praise are not
To wake from sleep.

And idle dreams men strong in heart and mind and
will

To remedy abuse, abolish forms of ill
Whilst angels weep

At havoc wrought in hearts, at homes destroyed
by sin,

At philanthropic schemes, black frauds, designed
to win

Renown, or gain
An easy competence from fools who yield their
mite

Through pampered idleness, not knowing wrong
from right.

Who shirk the strain
Of duty to their kind, and offer up to God,
In lieu of sacrifice of self, a lifeless clod—

A Coin of Gold.

God turns in wrath away. His kingdom comes
not nigh,

These Mammon worshippers, creating poverty,
These traitors bold,

Wrapped in their luxury, who 'neath their chariot
wheels

See mangled human forms, and spurn them with
their heels ;

Who take no heed

64 "Underworld of Humanity"

Of brotherhood except to tread his manhood down
To sweater or to slave, grim blight on every town!

Such is the need

Of Dives! Men must die to cushion out his seat
And spread a velvet pile beneath his lordly feet

Or coronet

Upon his panelled coach! This is a Christian land,
Religion free to all, the Bishop's dainty hand

Is often set

Upon men's bended heads, who stoop to take the
yoke

Of meek and lowly Christ, but rise to see the cloak
Of righteousness

Upon a mocking fiend, who through his brave
disguise

Smiles virtuously upon the yearning upraised eyes
Glad to confess

The kingship of the Lord—then rush to deeper sin,
And seek a god without for one not found within.

What is this Lord

This King, whose power holds men in bondage
still

Through twenty centuries? Undone remains His
will,

And like a sword

Thrust in a vital part, despair holds mighty sway,
Gnaws out the human heart as vultures seize their
prey.

And high above

“Underworld of Humanity” 65

The dust and smoke and heat, the hurry and the
fret

Of work to be achieved, the sun shines brightly yet
As when in love

He shone upon the Christ, who came in lowly guise
To struggle with the world, confound the rich and
wise.

Whose manhood taught
Stern sacrifice of earth's best treasures, honours,
gifts,
Taught men to stretch beyond the clouds to where
the rifts

Are backward caught
By angel-hands, revealing beauties rare and new
Through suffering attained, who to the last was
true

To his intent,
Life's crucifixion—with its triumph over death,
Its victory for man, its joy for God. What breath
Malevolent

This “Upas” has designed? To poison and
destroy
With vile transforming fumes each budding form
of joy

To formless ill?
Oh Light,—Thou world's great Light, Thy sweet-
ness and Thy grace
Are banishing the blight, are striving in the race
Beyond man's skill

66 "Underworld of Humanity"

To win alone. Oh love incomprehensible,
Whence came this strength to render thee invincible
To earthly power?

Thou answerest "Through Faith." What then
must we believe—
That which our eyes possess, that which our minds
perceive?

The trampled flower
Of innocence flung worthless to the cruel world?
The babe whose silken locks no Mother's hand has
curled,

Despoiled of care?
The crowded haunts of vice, of piteous want and
woe,

Of ignorance and crime where law is cursed a foe?
Or in the fair

Soft other-side; of wealth, of grace, of high
degree—

Of rose-hued dawn of youth, of grave-eyed dignity,
Of wide demesne,

Where flocks and herds have room, and birds
build happy nests—

Where ancient halls are filled with mirth of
marriage guests?

Not these you mean
Great Saviour Christ? Because Thou art gone
hence, must we

Follow Thy footsteps through the night's obscurity
Nor ask Thee why?

“ Underworld of Humanity ” 67

Well ! Thou didst lead men onwards centuries
ago,

And still Thy lantern guides them through the
misty snow

Who faintly cry,

More light, more light ! Oh God, we cannot see
Thy hand,

But hold ours through the dark, on to the Father-
land.

INSPIRATION

CEASE not thou heavenly voice to speak to me
Whilst I thy priest here in thy temple serve.
My prayers, the incense that to every curve
And pillar float, I offer ceaselessly,
That thro' the pictured East thy mystery
Appear like dove of Peace, to calm strained nerve
And heart, to keep me pure thy rites observe—
That when thou comest all is meet for thee,
I hear thee best at night, as Eli's child
Unknowing, first prophetic heard God's call,
Yet oft in busy mart a sound doth fall
Into my Soul's recesses, my wild bird
That singeth as he listeth 'neath the pall
Of heaven, to call me hence, swift, undeterr'd.

SHRINES

WHITBY

OH Caedmon, from the early wastes thy Song's
Sweet echo faintly chimes o'er waters sad,
Thy infant tongue matured in Shakspeare glad
Triumphant. To thy lonely shrine belongs
A nation's homage, to his, tireless throngs
A world. No mortal can new honours add
To ye, far towering o'er the mad
Chaotic age. Immortal Singers! Strong
To influence to lofty deed, to see
Sure growths of good, to show us God in tree,
And flower, and all the wonders of the deep—
And human nature in her human sleep
Awaking to her fulness, living, free,
Not coil like this o'er which good angels weep.

STRATFORD-ON-AVON

I SAW thee not, thou wondrous spirit there.
Thy birth-place they described it, thou wast not !
Thy grave, I marked with care the ancient spot,
Thy village, all was careful swept and fair,
Books, portraits, tokens of thee everywhere—
Of thee, immortal genius, scarce a jot,
Scarce even the reminiscence of a plot
Penn'd by thee, and I deemed my Soul was bare
Of its essentials, reverence and awe,
Not seeing what the crowds profess to see
In manuscript, in toy, in imagery—
To me but probe to wound which still is raw,
And I would picture thee without earth-flaw
Supremest bird of Song, upsoaring, free !

AMONGST THE GORSE

OH thou great gentleness of nature, slake
My fever'd thirst upon thy ample breast,
Here in the strife with men my brain is prest
With racking thought, my temples throb and ache
With futile effort God's idea o'ertake
In His creation "man," a sorry jest
Were naught behind. Oh nature, heal me, lest
I die in torment of this great heart-break.
Give me again the child's humility
Accepting gifts, nor questioning their source—
Thy gifts, and dry away the tears that course
Like rain floods o'er my cheeks, give me to see
God's spirit brooding over land and sea,
The Universe, these mountains and this gorse.

THE SISTERS

Sweet bond of nature, sisters of an age
Orphan'd of Parent at too early date
To comprehend the mysteries of Fate—
Now closed for ever childhood's happy page !
Next how to make melodious your cage
And teach tumultuous passion to abate
Her sway, and bring to beauty consummate
Your powers, these will your griefs assuage
And break the bars of tyranny. No scourge
The Soul can hinder in its upward flight
Tho' anguish o'er the body chant a dirge.
That, sinks to darkness rises to the light
A star. Who suffers silently and sings
Hath found the rose of joy without its stings.

LONDON STREETS

HERE am I in the very heart of things,
Jostle of rich and poor, beauty and sin
Stretch out their tentacles, draw me in
To their vortex. Passion of life that flings
Out its flowers. Wonder of perfume that clings
Round its skirts. Magical lure of the din
Of the traffic of worlds drawn into thin
Straight lines, condensed, as we pack into tins
The powder that kills. Here, soaring on wings
Of ambition are myriads for aims high
Or low, here Princes and Queens trail brocade
O'er the filth they ignore. And night's still eye
Notes sleeping the houseless, whilst wealth gives sigh
Of compassion. Pass on! The debt is paid,
The Policeman signals, your road is made!

AT CROSTHWAITE

TO CANON RAWNSLEY

To Crosthwaite Church my laggard steps I bent.—
So fair the scene without, of mountain, lake
And Autumn tree, methought, 'twere pity break
Their spell, to enter man-built shrine, tho' blest
With Christ traditions and the spirit spent
Of Poet, yet with mind alert, awake
I entered, found there food—and wine did slake
My thirst, which, soul-reviving, ear I lent
To doctrine of one Faith, one Brotherhood ;
One Flock if many Folds, One Shepherd, Who
Still watches, guarding it long centuries thro',
Teaching the law of Love, the one sweet good
Of life, by Sects so little understood
Which following men, still think God's will they
do.

SONNET TO A FRIEND

ON THE DEATH OF HER SON

DREAM not, my Friend, that all is gone when flesh
Fades from our presence, and we mourn our dead.
See thro' Death's majesty the radiance shed
Upon that face thou loved'st, so young and fresh—
Caught like a wild bird in the Fowler's mesh
It seem'd, but God it was the footsteps led
To fairer regions, where we may not tread
(So gross our being) yet. Across His thresh-
Hold wait our idols—who unspoiled by sin
He took to make Heav'n by their presence, home.
Oh doubt not, waiting here beneath the dome
Perplexed by jangling sounds, and creeds, and din
Of Politics, God lives! A voice within
Cries Father, and we trust Him past the tomb.

THREE SONNETS

TO MY FRIEND S. M. T.

OH life, hast given me of thy best, wine, wine
Of famous vintage. Love 'tis call'd, the crown
That equals me with Kings. Let custom frown,
And narrow Sects deny me, so thou shine
Sweet face into my wilderness, 'tis thine
To raise me to thy heights, soft bending down
To the dark waters, where despair would drown
Its struggling victims ; thine this life of mine
To weave of it a chaplet for thy brows—
A cradle for thy body's soft repose—
A garden sweet with lily and with rose.
As bridegroom rapt in presence of his spouse
In wondering worship low before her bows,
So worshipping my soul to thee outflows.

SECOND SONNET

AND love of life at thy dear touch awakes,
Thy hands' soft magic smooth away my care,
My kisses on thy brow, thy lips, thy hair,
Inspire me with the larger scope that makes
For song and beauty. Yet within me quakes
A fear, lest I should lose thee unaware
By fault or flaw in loving ; sweetest bear
With me on Earth, ere Death our joyance breaks.
Yet not alone for Earth, eternal burns
The flame at which our torch was lit, no power
Can quench God's attribute.—This solemn hour
Of Love's achievement, heavenward soaring spurns
All save its majesty, my soul discerns
Thee, my Beloved, and craves no other dower.

THIRD SONNET

THY gift magnificent I humbly take,
And hide it in my breast where none may see.
And then in solitude I set it free
And thou and I beloved a feast there make,
And with thanksgiving to High God partake
Of that bestowed on us so liberally.
And then with reverent hands, mine laid on thee
And thine on me, we venture in Love's wake.

What is the world to us, its joys, its pains?
Who, having seen the highest, still can dwell
Where lower tones, disharmonies compel
The soul to lower uses? Whoso gains
The Heights (thy Height, oh Love), for ever
 strains
To Life immortal, where alone 'tis well.

SONNETS ON THE LIFE
OF CHRIST

YAHVEH

(IN HEAVEN)

I

Th' experimental world I made is dark
And darker grows, o'ershadowed by the blight
Of Satan, to and fro he stalks, my might
Deriding, branding on men's foreheads mark
Of Sovereignty so deep, scarce left is spark
Of fire that spheres ere this had filled with light.
Free-will my gift to them, else where delight
Or object in creation. Myriads stark
In hopeless misery adherence rue
To you arch tempter, and tho' late, I fain
Their Eden pleasures would give back again,
But how 'gainst foe so powerful carry thro'
My thought? In human form—ah, there's the
clue,
Project, envizualise it to man's brain.

82 Sonnets on Life of Christ

(IN HEAVEN)

YAHVEH TO GABRIEL

2

Be my confederate and earthward fly—
Prepare the one discovered fit to wear
The majesty of Motherhood, to bear
The awful burthen of a Godhead—I
Will be with her and grown to manhood vie
With Satan for my own, and man's despair
Bid vanish. Task stupendous! Everywhere
Will conflict be, and strong remorseless hate
And deep deception. But with view of end,
And love to combat hate, all will be well.
Depart, thy task is heavy, sounding knell
Apparent—mighty winds must forces rend
That separate us from the airs that bend
O'er Earth, airs solid with the fumes of Hell.

(ON EARTH)

3

Hail ! Highly favoured ! God well pleased with
thee

Spake Gabriel, entering with a flood of light
The cot of Mary, who afraid at sight
Of such dread splendour wept exceedingly,
And questioned her young heart what it might be.
“ Fear not,” cried he, “ God’s overshadowing might
“ Is on thee, to uplift thee to His height
“ Fit vessel sees He thee of purity
“ His germ confide. A child shalt thou conceive,
“ Bring forth, call Jesus, on thy breast shall lie
“ God’s Son, of Him and thee the fruit. His
leave

Then took the Angel, nor did Mary grieve
But dwelt in silence till the hour drew nigh
That brought fulfilment of old prophecy.

84 Sonnets on Life of Christ

4

Oh mystic light that flooded Earth and sky !
Oh God-sent Angel form that grew to gaze
Of Shepherds, flashing out on them great blaze
Of glory, as they watched the night clouds fly
Athwart the firmament. Oh voice ! Oh cry !
Oh harbinger of new, of fairer days
To be ! Oh hosts of Heaven, your shout of
praise

Rings thro' the vaulted space. "Glory on high !
"Go see Him where He lies in manger bed"
Cried Gabriel. Oh wondrous love ! Oh birth
Transcendent ! Gift amazing given to Earth !
Oh miracle ! Beneath that humble shed
Was "Yahveh's" birthplace, he to flesh was wed.

.
But in the Inn of room for Him was dearth.

5

The child cried, "Wist ye not that I must be
 About my Father's business" at reproof
 Of Mary finding Him 'neath Temple roof
 Rapt, spirit-pale, entranced at doctor's knee—
 Who hearing, seeing Him, divinity
 Well-nigh discovered. Questionings of proof
 Of doctrines past his years, alone, aloof—
 Wise men astonished whisper "Who is He?"

But He, His protest done, on Mary smiled
 Rememb'ring her all human, unaware
 Of God in him she idolized as child—
 Annunciation, Angel, Star, and rare
 Rich gifts forgotten, followed her, took share
 Of toil, and passed his boyhood undefiled.

6

To Eastern lands He journeyed, ancient lore
Of Brahma, Buddha, Zoroaster learn—
Of what he 'neath their symbols might discern
Of God, cull'd flowers of wisdom from them, door
Oped of their mysteries, pierced to their core
Abuses, castes made for the high to spurn
The low, neglected naught that His return
To Israel might serve, none could ignore
His gifts magnetic—following him where'er
He went. The learned with astonishment—
The Outcasts with rejoicing heard. He spent
Long years in wandering, blessing everywhere ;
Until in thirtieth year he came to bear
His people's sins, avert their punishment.

7

“Behold the Lamb of God” the Baptist cried
As passed the Lord not yet to man made known,
With wondrous meekness seeking not his own,
Himself call’d but a “voice” to publish wide
The fame of Him yet silent would provide
World’s light—and now the Christ to fulness grown
Baptised, enhaloed by God’s sign as shown—
Proclaimed Him “This is He, made flesh, your
guide,

“Repent, repent, make straight His paths. Behold
“He cometh after, mightier than I
“Whose shoes I am not worthy to untie.
“To world so poor His majesty to hold
“Comes God, to bear your sins in human mould,”

Enough that I John of Him testify.

88 Sonnets on Life of Christ

8

In wrath the Arch-Fear seeing Him alone
In wilderness, and fasting, to assail
Worn soul descends. In mockery bids "hail"
"If Son of God why hunger, when a stone
"At word grew bread? Why kingdoms lacking,
groan
"When all the thrones arrayed from crags we
scale
"Were thine wouldst worship me? Of what avail
"Thy Godship save to reign? Thyself cast prone
"From temple that perceiving angel host
"About Thee, I may know Thee, what Thou art,
"But Christ, mere bread, not food—and to thy
boast
"Of thrones, God only shalt thou serve—depart
"Nor tempt me foolish one!" The evil ghost
Flees baffled and leaves Jesus strong of heart.

9

To mountain slopes, 'neath soft Judean skies
Men follow Him with troublous interest
Not knowing Him for God made manifest,
But moved to strange emotions, those calm eyes
Upon them, that voice thrilling them, with wise
Poetic teachings, parables. With "Blest
"The poor in spirit, come to me for rest
"Ye toilers, mourners. Put upon you guise
"Of childhood, for of such my kingdom, give
"To him that asketh, love your enemies."
Who eats with publicans and pharisees,
Heals blind and lepers, shows men way to live
Eterne, since man's great quest more life achieve.

Three years He taught nor rested nor took ease.

From keepers fled, with fetters cast aside
The devil-haunted comes where Jesus taught.
And frenzied, he unwittingly besought
Redemption, hearing which, the devils cried—
Knowing His power, and that they could not hide
From Him, and that if miracle He wrought
They would be formless—rather than be naught
Would He allow swine dwelling? Multiplied
They swift at His assent, and wildly fled
Each to his like, and to his doom. The man
Delivered, pale and rent, to Jesus ran
In love and worship, sane in heart and head
To be his Follower henceforth till the red
Dawn hail the coming of God's winnowing fan.

II

Oh pitiful to sinners, most of all
To woman in her piteous estate
Of weakness and subjection. That she ate
The fruit of Eden, turning sweet to gall
Now bears the brunt.

One brought they, mocking fall
Of her for condemnation, death her fate
By stoning, even now outside they wait,
A multitude of faces like a wall
Of fire. The Master, musing, said, "let him
"That's sinless cast first stone on her." No hand
Was raised, and lifting eyes, he sees there stand
Alone the woman, cup filled to the brim
With grief. "Did none condemn?" "None,
Lord," eyes dim
"Nor I, go sin no more."

Not such He bann'd.

92 Sonnets on Life of Christ

12

“Hadst Thou been here he lived”—and Jesus wept
At heart-rent cry of Mary, at the tears
Of Martha, zealous for the work appears
To those so futile in soul things adept.

“Did I not tell you faithless he but slept?”

“Where lies he? Here entombed Lord with his
peers

“Dead, dead.” “Come forth,” cried Jesus, and
appears

All grave dight Lazarus, whose glance o’erswept
Recovered joys. The multitude amazed
Departed, lauding and exalting name
Of Him, and spreading wonders of His fame
His miracles—the man from dead seen raised—
Sick healed.

But Lazarus and his sisters praised
Him God, and worshipped Him with Souls aflame.

13

With majesty of outraged God, He scourged
And swept before Him those His house defiled.
And to the Pharisees put off his mild
Demeanour, damning them in words that surged
Like storm-tost waves on rocky coast and urged
His own 'ware like hypocrisies, reviled
Their form and letter services, up-piled
Upon the spirit till the thing emerged
A "whited sepulchre." "Woe unto you
"Ye serpents, vipers' offspring, how escape
"Hell's judgment tho' your bordered garments
drape
"With white your bodies, and your inward hue
"Is black, unsightly?"

Thus spake Christ to Jew
In anger, taking on Him kingly shape.

94 Sonnets on Life of Christ

14

At supper with the twelve his chosen, sat
The Christ, John nearest, best beloved. Wine,
bread

He gave "This do in my remembrance" said
As with supreme compassion looking at
Them with "One here is traitor." Up all gat
Aghast "which, Lord," as each at each in dread
Uplooked. "'Tis he with whom I eat," the red
Of guilt sprang up to cheek of Judas, that
He fled pursued by furies, gave for gold
His Lord.

The devil having one allured
By lust, thought yet another might assured
Be, by his cowardice, but Peter's hold
Was stronger, and at Christ's grieved look grew
bold
Again—and for His sake all things endured.

15

“If it be possible let pass oh God
This cup” and bloody sweat swept up to face
Ethereal, yet agonised for race
Of men so hard to save. “Alone I trod
“The winepress, and alone with feet unshod
“The Desert, now alone this hour embrace,
“Do Thou Thy will.” Clouds swiftly chase
Each other o’er Gethsemane, His rod
God spares not even in this awful hour,
But silent turns away at bitter cry
“If it be possible”

The watchers lie
Asleep, alone He wrestles with His power
O’er death, and gives Himself at last for our
Poor hearts, that faint with fear and Him deny.

96 Sonnets on Life of Christ

16

Pierced hands and feet, thorns fretting tortured
brow

Wounded and dying hangs of Love the Lord,
On Cross triumphant o'er the nails and cord
Loud crying "God my God why hast me Thou
"Forsaken?" Men and women stand below
Who love Him, by the multitudes ignored
And watch the life ebb of the Christ adored
Sore weeping. All is ended! Hark, what now?
Cry His traducers, as the veil is rent
Of Temple, and the Earth in darkness lies—
Is shaken, and the dead from graves arise,
And evil stalks unfettered, as the spent
Christ hangs.

But Joseph took His body, lent
Him tomb, which soldiers watched with jealous
eyes.

17

THE last act o'er of that dread drama, naught
 Remains now but await act consummate
 Himself revivify. Mary whom great
 Affection taught, first saw the form she sought
 In tomb, let fall embalming spices brought—
 Amazed at sight of that she wept so late
 On Calvary, now pace with wonted gait
 The Garden;—leaps her heart at vision fraught
 With fear at spirit substanceless “Cries He
 “Knowst not thy Lord?” Go tell of me; she
 fled
 Rejoicing with the news “He is not dead,”
 In doubt his Brethren came—

The mystery

Of unseen forces not yet history,
 But known to Him, and presently to spread.

98 Sonnets on Life of Christ

(IN HEAVEN)

YAHVEH TO GABRIEL

18

THE task is finished—Satan's day declines
Tho' furiously he rushes to and fro
Men paths besetting, heaping woe on woe ;
His hideous crew with him the Earth confines
Roam, tracking helpless prey, with him combines
A Host disqualify those brought at throe
Of birth, born in my likeness, up to grow
To perfect knowledge. Hopeless new designs
Evolve, he sees, but ceases not decry
My might his thrones dishonour, and restore
The innocence make Paradise before
The Fall. Man's immortality have I
Secured—what is of him must surely die,
See him dejected sink to nether door.

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